



IF YOU DON'T FEEL SAFE, LITTLE ELSE MATTERS!

*By Ron Cross
Board of Commission Chairman*

A couple of weeks ago, the Commission had the privilege of attending the annual Employees and Retirees Service Recognition Event. This is the little social

where County employees are awarded pins for years of service in five-year increments, and retirees are recognized for their many years of dedication. They also recognize the employees to be added to the Military Plaque in the auditorium, and there was a moment of silence in memory of Raymond Lee.

It was extremely rewarding to hear supervisors and division directors tell us all about the dedication and work ethic of the employee's and retirees being honored and how their attitude and spirit make Columbia County so special. There were members of almost every County department recognized. The Commission has long felt that Columbia County has superior employees, but sometimes we take them for granted and this event highlights their great service.

As I was heading home the thought occurred to me that even though we recognized some members of the Sheriff's Office, that is the area that we really take for granted. It has long been understood that "feeling safe" is the top priority for a good quality of life. If you do not feel safe, little else matters - not good schools, not good government, not good recreation opportunities, not much of anything. If you cannot walk the streets, go shopping, leave your children in school and daycare, worship, etc. and feel safe, those things have less value.

In a little research, I discovered quite a few amazing statistics: In Columbia County since 1996, the population has increased 49.3%; overall reported crimes in the county have decreased 24.4%. Whoa! Should not the number of crimes increase as population increases? Further research shows that our murder rate per capita is 67% of the national average; our aggravated assault rate is 15% of the national average; our robbery rate is 26% of the national average; our burglary rate is 38% of the national average; our thefts are 75% of the national average and our rape cases are only 10% of the national average. Not only are

we below most all national averages on crime, we are also below national averages on number of employees in the Sheriff's Department; 2.98 employees per 1,000 citizens versus the national average of 3.5 employees per 1,000 citizens. They are doing more with less.

The Commission feels that the Sheriff's Office does a tremendous job for the citizens of Columbia County. Of course, we realize that if you are a victim of crime, the crime rate to you is 100%. However, the chances of that happening are much less in Columbia County than in the majority of the nation. We applaud the efforts of our Sheriff and his staff and hope each of you would express your appreciation as you see them on the streets, on their bikes, in their patrol cars, and anywhere you spot the familiar uniform.

SHERIFF'S CORNER

The S.T.O.P.P.E.D. (Sheriff's Telling Our Parents & Promoting Educated Drivers) program was developed to help parents with young drivers. This voluntary notification system assists parents in watching their young drivers and raises awareness for drivers under the age of 21.

1. Parents voluntarily register with the Columbia County Sheriff's Office any motor vehicle that will be operated by a driver under the age of 21.
2. When you register, you receive an identification decal to affix to the rear window of each registered vehicle.
3. If for any reason of the registered vehicles with a driver under the age of 21 is stopped by the Sheriff's Office, the Deputy will complete a notification card that includes the time and location of the stop, the driver's name and number of passengers, reason for the stop, and whether traffic citations were issued.
4. Notifications are mailed directly to parents to make them aware of potential problems and to enable them to enforce any parental rules that often co-exist with teenage driving privileges.

To register, please call the Columbia County Sheriff's Office of Community Services at 706-541-2856 and request a registration form or go to www.columbiacountyga.gov and follow the Community Services link to the S.T.O.P.P.E.D. tab.

Community Calendar & Announcements

MAY

- 6 *The Weather Station: Tornadoes, Hurricanes, and Typhoons* at Reed Creek Park for ages 5+ from 4:30 – 5:30 PM. Pre-registration required by calling 706-210-4027. Non-members \$2.
- 7 *Adopt-a-Stream Training for Adults* at Reed Creek Park from 9 AM – 1 PM. Join volunteer Mike Reardon to learn how to collect important data each month on the health of local streams for the state of GA. Register by calling 706-210-4027.
- 10 *BYU Young Ambassadors* will perform a family-oriented show of music and dancing from Broadway plays at the Imperial Theatre at 7 PM to benefit the Golden Harvest Food Bank. Call 706-722-8341 for tickets.
- 11 *Basic Cake Decorating* class at 1 PM in the Evans Library for ages 8 – 11. Call 706-447-7657 to register.
Nurturing Nature Walks for 3-5 year olds (younger siblings are welcome!) at Reed Creek Park from 10–11 AM. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Non-members \$2.
- 12 *Basic Cake Decorating* class at 4 PM in the Evans Library for ages 8 – 11. Call 706-447-7657 to register.
- 13 *All About Frogs* at Reed Creek Park for ages 5+ from 8-9 PM. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Call 706-210-4027 to register. Free.
- 14 The Columbia County Ballet will open this year's *Art in the Park* with its annual concert, *Mayfest*, at 10 AM at the Amphitheater.



Community Shred Day at the Columbia County Recycling Center on 1930 William Few Parkway from 10 AM – 2 PM. Five container limit – for residents only. Call 706-312-7195 for more info!

Camouflage in Nature at Reed Creek Park for ages 5+ from 11 AM - noon. Find out why some animals blend in and some don't. Pre-registration required by calling 706-210-4027. Non-members \$2.

National Association of Letter Carriers Food Drive to benefit the Golden Harvest Food Bank. Please leave a bag of non-perishable items at your mailbox!

- 16 *Monday Night Book Discussion* at the Evans Library beginning at 6:30 PM. This month, *Ape House* by Sara Gruen will be discussed.

- 17 *All About Birds* at Reed Creek Park for ages 5+ from 4:30 – 5:30 PM. Find out what makes a bird a bird. Pre-registration required by calling 706-210-4027. Non-members \$2.

- 19 *Brown Bag Lunch Book Discussion* at 11:30 AM in the Evans Library. *Winds of Change* by Martha Grimes will be discussed.

Harlem Library Book Discussion will begin at 4 PM. The group will review *Plain Perfect* by Beth Wiseman.

Pond Exploration at Reed Creek Park from 4:30-5:30 PM. Children will learn about critters in the Reed Creek pond. Be prepared to get wet. Children aged 5+ must be accompanied by an adult and pre-registration required by calling 706-210-4027. Non-members \$2.

Start of *Summer Reading* program – pick up reading folders today!

- 21 *Summer Reading Kickoff* from 10 AM – 5 PM in the Evans Library. Enjoy water slides, climbing wall, sumo wrestling suits, face painting, sidewalk art, belly dancing, and live entertainment, popcorn and drinks!

The Protected Animals of Georgia at Reed Creek Park for ages 7+ from 11 AM - noon. Find out about the 117 species of protected animals in GA and how we can restore and preserve wildlife. Pre-registration required by calling 706-210-4027. Non-members \$2.

- 26 *Nurturing Nature Walks* for 3-5 year olds (younger siblings are welcome!) at Reed Creek Park from 10–11 AM. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Non-members \$2.

28-30 Libraries closed for Memorial Day.

- 30 County offices closed for Memorial Day.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Birthday parties at Reed Creek Nature Park for the young naturalist feature indoor and outdoor games and activities and a chance to explore the natural world. Call 706-210-4027 for more information.
- Georgia's annual air quality ban on residential outdoor burning begins on May 1st and will remain in place through September 30th. Most types of open burning are restricted during the ban in an effort to manage the summertime surge in ozone levels.
- On June 3rd, the Columbia County Choral Society will perform *Incarnatio Mystera* at 7:30 p.m. at Wesley United Methodist Church. This preview concert, which is in anticipation of the June 19th World Premiere at Lincoln Center in New York City, will also feature the combined choirs of Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School and singers from around the CSRA. To purchase tickets, call 762-233-7793 (local call) or go to www.ccchoralsociety.org.
- Reed Creek Park Summer Nature Clubs begin in June for ages 3-11. Dates and times are set according to age. Call 706-210-4027 or e-mail ibeltran@columbiacountyga.gov for fees and registration information.